Testimony of
Sharon M. Palmer, Commissioner
Department of Labor
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
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Good Day Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis, Senator Witkos and Representative Betts and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with testimony regarding **House Bill No. 6959 AA Establishing a Task Force to Develop a Pilot Earn and Learn Program.** My name is Sharon Palmer and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Labor.

The programs envisioned under this proposed bill (apprenticeships, work-based learning, etc.) are all encouraged under Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which will generally become effective on July 1, 2015. WIOA will help job seekers and workers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and match employers with skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. WOIA authorizes key employment and training programs and the American Job Center (referred to as One-Stop Center in the law) service delivery system to help workers acquire the tools and skills they need to be successful and to connect employers to the skilled workers they need. WIOA aligns the "core" programs to provide coordinated, comprehensive services.

Due to DOL's extensive involvement with WIOA and workforce development, I would recommend that the Labor Commissioner be added to this task force. Further, DOL, through its Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) serves as the Governor's principal workforce development policy advisor.

I am concerned that the proposed bill provides for supervised employment that compensates the student at a level sufficient to assist such student in financing his or her higher education, but in no case less than the federal minimum wage. Connecticut's minimum wage is higher than the federal minimum wage and thus would supersede the federal minimum wage.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.